



**SAFE TO[®]
TRADE**

Modernising food safety assurance across the Arab region

Introducing a voluntary third-party
assurance programme for regulators,
brands and consumers

Steve Wearne, August 2026



Purpose of today's webinar

- Introduce the Safe to Trade concept
- Present the opportunity for modernisation
- Outline potential delivery mechanisms
- Demonstrate alignment with regional ambitions
- Begin the conversation with regulators and key stakeholders





SECTION 1

Context and drivers

Why Safe to Trade exists



Global trends shaping the need for modern assurance:

- Food sectors worldwide are expanding and diversifying rapidly
- Regulatory systems in many nations are under pressure
 - limited resources, growing demands
- Consumers expect consistent standards, transparency, and modern approaches
- Businesses seek ways to demonstrate good practice and differentiate themselves

Safe to Trade supports modernisation without requiring disruptive legislative change





The evolving food landscape

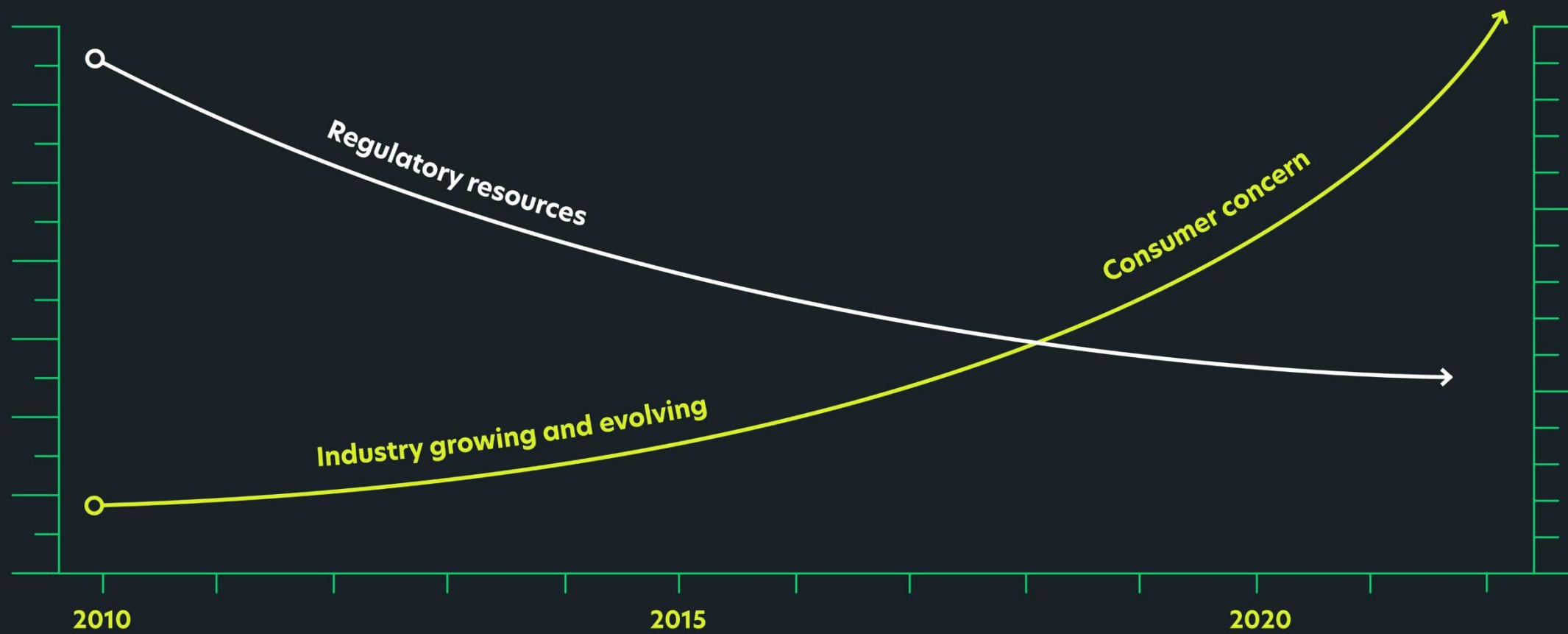


Across global markets, authorities face:

- Growth of diverse food channels (hospitality, retail, delivery, aggregators)
- Increased cross-border complexity
- Pressure to ensure standards despite workforce and capacity constraints
- Rising consumer expectations around safety and trust



The evolving food landscape



The modern assurance challenge



Regulators need:

- Scalable assurance models
- Greater consistency
- Insight – not raw data
- A mechanism to identify risk, best practice and drive improvement
- Ways to leverage external capability without compromising oversight

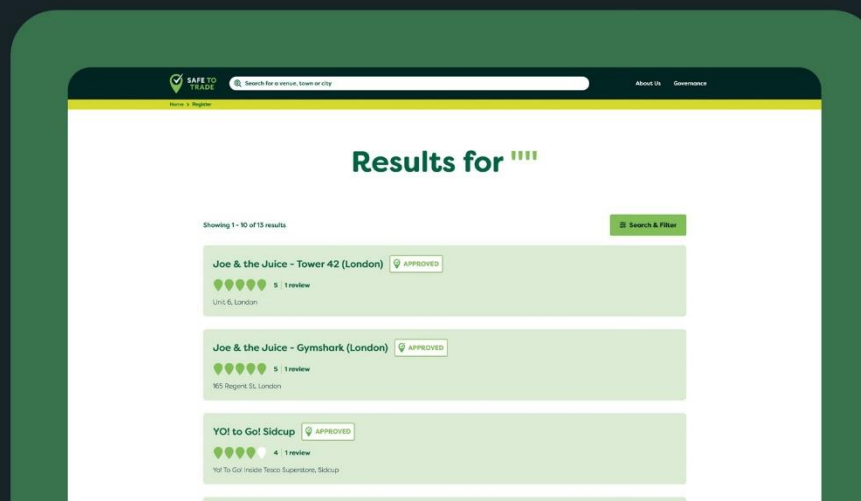
Safe to Trade aligns with these goals



Consumer expectations are rising



Eat with
confidence.
Just look
for the logo.



Tell us how "Location One" is doing?

Your overall rating for this location

★★★★★ < Tremendous

Title of feedback

Summarise your feedback in a few words

Feedback 0/600

What was your experience at this location?

When did you visit this venue?

Please select

Please select a rating for this location (Optional)

Seating area and toilets ★★★★★ < Click to rate



SECTION 2

What Safe to Trade is

voluntary Third-Party Assurance programmes (vTPA) in the supply chain

Programmes may operate across multiple stages (not exhaustive)

PRIMARY PRODUCTION



PROCESSING / MANUFACTURING



PACKAGING



TRANSPORT / LOGISTICS



RETAIL



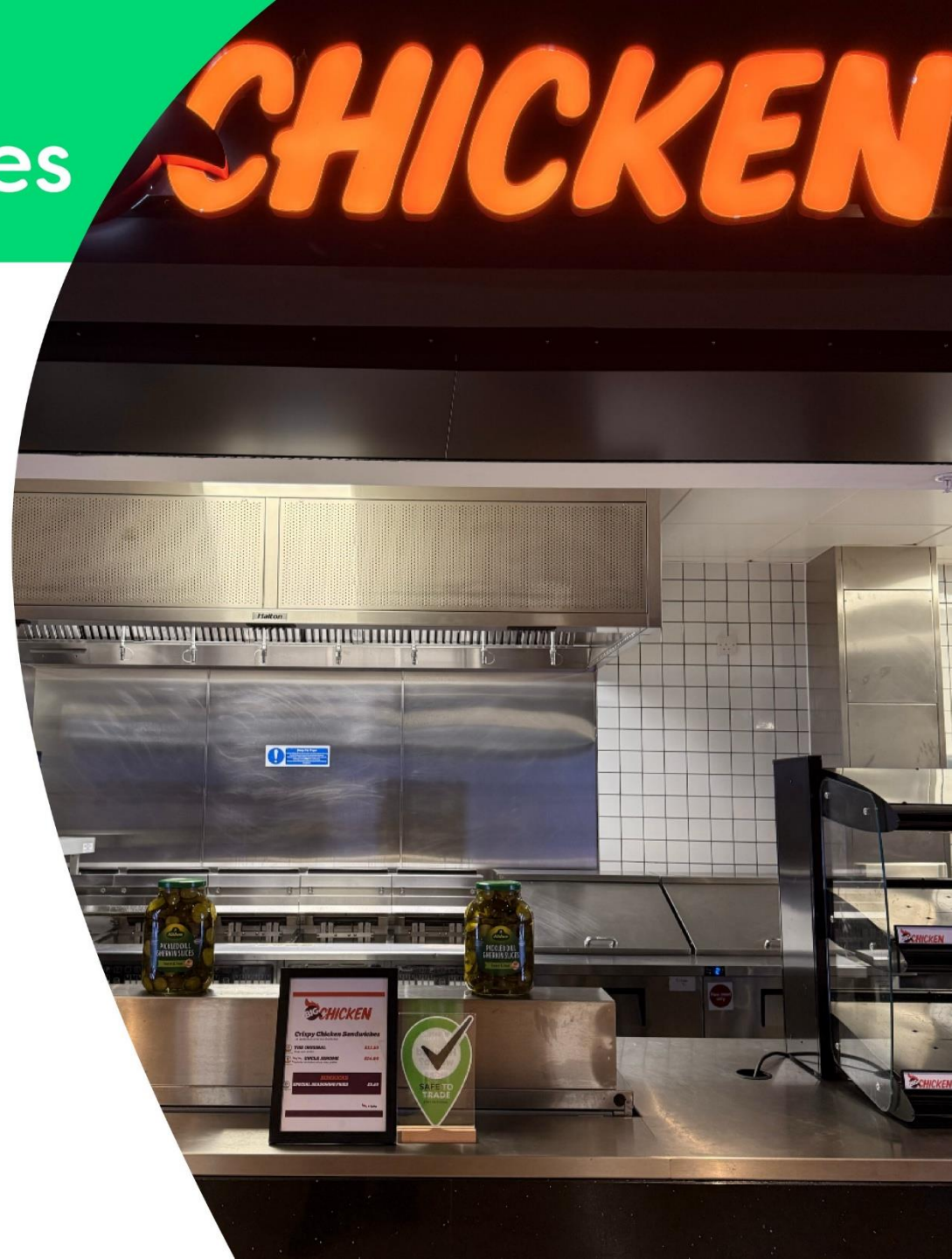
HOSPITALITY / CATERING



What Safe to Trade provides

A vTPA programme designed to:

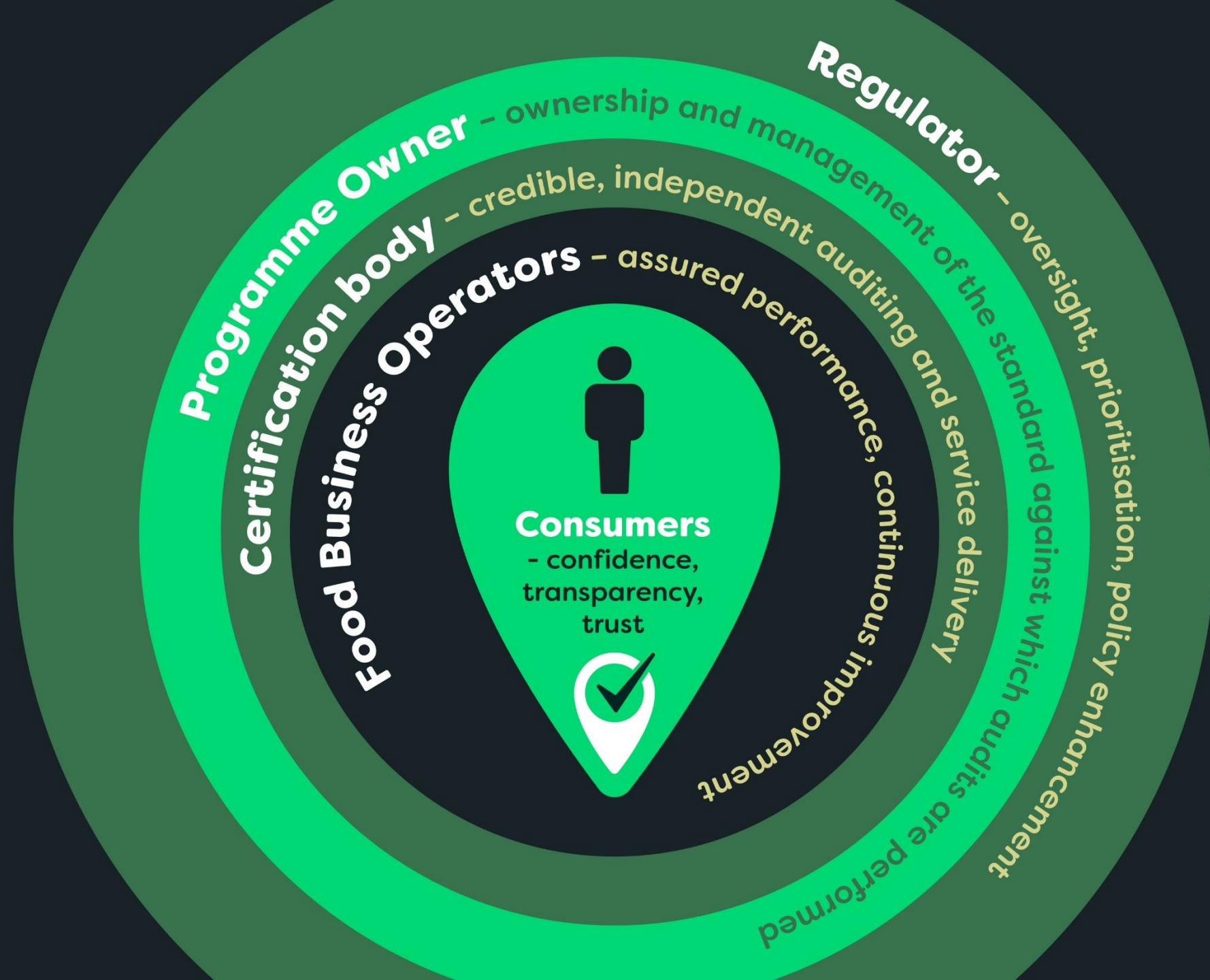
- Demonstrate regulatory compliance
- Ensure professional audit capacity and capability
- Provide structured, consistent, reliable assurance
- Offer insights that help improve food businesses and regulatory outcomes
- Increase trust for consumers, businesses, and authorities





Key stakeholders

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My experience in environmental health enforcement has shown the importance of a clear and consistent framework that is delivered by a team of competent professionals.

From a regulatory perspective, Safe to Trade provides the consistency, and scalable assurance model we need. It allows us to leverage third party expertise and insight while maintaining regulatory oversight.

Clare Lycett, Senior Practitioner, Environmental Health
Primary Authority Lead Officer, Milton Keynes City Council





I think the Safe to Trade Programme is the most important contribution to food safety in the hospitality sector since the UK Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Sterling Crew, Chair of the Food Authenticity Network
and Safe to Trade Independent Governance Board Member





**SAFE TO
TRADE**

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PASTA
EVANGELISTS

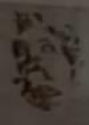


*Spinach
Seasonini*

*Whole grain
Tortiglioni*

*Malfadino
New*

*DISPLAY
ONLY*

 **PASTA**
EVANGELISTS

 **PASTA**
EVANGELISTS

 **PASTA**
EVANGELISTS

Data insights improvement model



Regulators
want insights,
not raw data.





SECTION 3

**Value for Arab region
regulators**

Alignment with Arab region priorities



Safe to Trade supports key regional ambitions:



Modernisation of
regulatory systems



Consistency and
standardisation
in auditing



Enhanced assurance
for tourism-heavy
economies



Clear
evidence-based
decision
making



Support for national
transformation
agendas

(e.g. Vision 2030 in KSA)

Efficiency and effectiveness gains



- Allows regulators to focus resources on the highest-risk or lowest-performing businesses
- Standardised delivery leads to more predictable, reliable outcomes
- Professionalised auditing improves trust and quality
- Provides a scalable assurance mechanism across multiple jurisdictions



International alignment



Safe to Trade aligns with:

- Codex principles for risk-based, modernised assurance
- Global direction of travel for voluntary third-party models
- Best practices already adopted by many major international brands



Codex principles



Principle 1 - Planning and decision making

Principle 2 - Role and responsibilities

Principle 3 - Transparency of policies and processes

Principle 4 - Regulatory framework

Principle 5 - Proportionality

Principle 6 - Confidentiality

Principle 7 - Avoiding burdens on food business operators





SECTION 4

Delivery model and partnering

Preferred delivery model

Regional Certification Body (our proposal for Arab states)

- Strong strategic partner
- Provides consistency across the region
- Demonstrates independence
- Scalable workforce and audit capability



Why regional Certification Bodies matter



- Avoids governments building their own inspectorates (which can break the model)
- Provides independent, commercial expertise
- Offers scalability, consistency, and credibility
- Fits the structural needs of the Arab region
- Supports both hospitality and retail sectors





SECTION 5

**Future development and
continuous improvement**

Evolving standards over time



Safe to Trade allows:

- Incremental enhancement of the standard
- Continuous raising of performance
- Alignment with national priorities
- Inclusion of best practice beyond regulatory minimums
- Avoidance of constant legislative change

This flexibility is valuable for rapidly developing regions.



Best practice and higher performance levels



- Programme can identify and reward higher performance levels
- Encourages industry to lead its own improvement
- Creates a positive cycle for national reputation and tourism
- Moves beyond “regulatory minimum” thinking
- Supports long-term economic and food safety goals





SECTION 6

Next steps

Proposed next steps for regulators to consider:

1. Bilateral discussions to explore country-specific alignment
2. Review of delivery partner options
3. Exploration of pilot opportunities
4. Mapping Safe to Trade ecosystem to national structures
5. Identify complementary priorities for modernisation and insight-driven governance



Questions and discussion

